



THE PLACER HERALD

Our 150th Year, No. 15 — 50 cents

Your Community Voice

Wednesday, April 10, 2002

3-2 vote tosses out math program

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These last months of the 2001-2002 school year will see the final use of Everyday Math (EM).

The mathematics curriculum used in all Rocklin elementary schools since its adoption in 1997 will be replaced.

Board members Mark

Forbes, Mark Klang and Jeff Nicolayson voted to replace the controversial math program during a special meeting on April 4. Camille Maben and Michelle Nunn voted to keep the program.

"I've received a few emails — some disappointed, wondering where the district goes from here," said Maben.

The board's decision called to replace EM with the

Harcourt-Brace math program at all Rocklin elementary schools in the fall. Accelerated Math, a supplement used by teachers for gaps in EM, was not affected by the decision and will likely remain in the district.

The special meeting in the City Council Chambers on Rocklin Road was attended by several dozen district teachers. Public comments at

the meeting lasted nearly 45 minutes, as teachers, parents and one student appealed to the board to keep EM in place.

Of the more than one dozen people who spoke, most of whom were teachers, only one supported the replacement of EM. Nancy Pomeroy, a Rocklin parent, told the board that she had spoken with several

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dramatic increase in district standardized test scores since the program was implemented, as well as teacher and student enthusiasm for the program.

EM, created by the University of Chicago and used throughout the country, did not meet the standards of the California State Board of Education.

The Rocklin school district has only been able to use EM with special state waivers. Local EM opponents have cited this fact, while ques-

tioning the causes for standardized test improvements. Nicolayson said that while test scores increased with the implementation of EM, the district also "increased math class time 50 percent and reduced class size in grades one through three."

"It's been not only EM, but the entire math program — the Everyday Math curriculum, more math time, Accelerated Math and professional development for our teachers," added Maben.

At the request of the school board the district math committee, comprised of teachers and administrators, piloted EM and recom-

mended its use at all Rocklin elementary schools in 1996.

In January 1997, the board approved EM for grades 1-5 at all district elementary schools. Forbes and Maben were on the school board at the time. Both voted for the adoption of EM.

"I had voted to adopt Everyday Math. It was new and we anticipated that it would be updated to meet state standards, but it wasn't. It doesn't meet even our own (district) standards," said Forbes.

"The board was very supportive (for EM) at the time (in 1997). I think quite frankly a couple of people

didn't like it. We're elected officials, the voice of the community and best interest of the majority of students, and I don't think this process lent itself to that," said Nunn.

The decision to replace EM comes after the board decided in a 3-1 vote in March 2001 to prohibit the district from piloting EM, or applying for a state waiver to use EM, in the 2002-2003 school year. Klang, who has

adamantly called for the replacement of EM, campaigned for his board position with the promise to try to get rid of the program. "It was a major reason

why I ran. Some people said I had an agenda. I did. There was no hidden agenda. I ran on this issue," Klang said.

Shawn Kelly, Everyday Math representative in California, said he will remain active with the program in the district.

"I will make myself available. In fact, I am sending a consultant to Rocklin Elementary on Wednesday to visit with teachers for trouble

shooting," he said.

Kelly maintains that while EM does not completely meet state standards, the program is still one of quality.

"A lot of people thought these standards were handed down from God. But actually standards were made by people who weren't the best authorities — 150,000 teachers and 2 million students in the U.S. are using Everyday Math," Kelly added.

As key reasons to retain EM supporters point to a See MATH / Page A15

School board made bad choice

The Rocklin Unified School District board's decision to terminate the most successful elementary math program this district has ever had only proves the ignorance of some politicians who get a head case from serving an elected position. School board members are supposed to represent the people of the community, not just their own child. Yet, board members Mark Klang and Jeff Nicolaysen readily admit their personal experience turned them against this math program.

Teachers are expected to put in countless hours piloting programs and making recommendations only to have them fall on deaf ears. This program was supported by parents, teachers, the math committee, engineers and college professors. However, the final decision rested upon three board members who, without any experience in selecting curriculum, have decided what the children in Rocklin will learn.

Until I asked Mark Forbes and Nicolaysen to meet with me regarding this math program, both admitted they knew very little about Everyday Math. Yet these two, along with Klang, voted last spring not to pilot the program even though it achieved

high test scores and was clearly the teachers' choice. To Forbes' credit, he came back and observed me teach a lesson which was more than either of the other two board members did. Klang threatened Michelle Nunn with "I can't wait until November" (meaning her term will be over). Doesn't that sound like a person you want making decisions for your child's education? As a teacher in the district I would like to thank Camille Maben and Nunn for devoting years for you and your children and for supporting RUSD and its teachers.

Parents, next year when your child complains about math, contact Forbes, Klang, or Nicolaysen. They seem to think they know more than the educators about how your children learn. Rocklin used to be the number one choice for teachers in the area, but it is this defiant lack of support that is making teachers go elsewhere. How sad for your children and this community.

*Jeanie Simpson,
Rocklin*